

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 1, 2006

The Honorable Conrad Burns
Chairman
Senate Interior Appropriations Subcommittee
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Byron Dorgan
Ranking Member
Senate Interior Appropriations Subcommittee
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member:

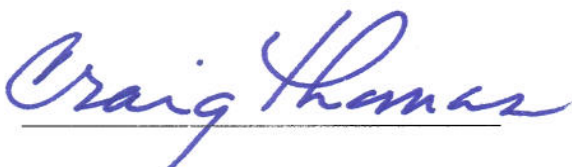
As you know, the Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program provides payments to local communities to compensate them for losses to their tax bases that result from the presence of significant amounts of federal land in their counties. These funds are critical to the budgets of local governments, which supply many essential services such as search and rescue, law enforcement, road maintenance and education. The PILT program demonstrates the federal government's partnership with the counties in stewardship of the nation's public lands and in providing services to citizens.

In addition to the regular residents of our country's public land counties, millions of Americans who visit national parks, forests, and other public lands rely on county governments to provide high-quality services and a clean and safe environment. The PILT program makes this possible.

Unfortunately, the Department of the Interior's Fiscal Year (FY) 2007 budget request of \$198 million – \$37 million less than was appropriated for FY 2006 – reverses the positive trend over recent years of incremental increases, moving towards full funding. This places an undue financial hardship on our counties, who are mandated by law to provide many critical public services.

The current authorization level for the PILT program is estimated to be \$350 million for FY 2007. As we work to achieve full funding for PILT, we urge the Committee to provide at least \$240 million for FY 2007. We look forward to working with you to support this important program.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Craig Thomas in blue ink.Handwritten signature of Harry Reid in blue ink.

Lynch

Murray

John Johnson

Robert A. Nicholas

Mike DeWitt

John Ensign

Robert J. Bennett

Tom Hark

Richard Shelby

Jimme Kristin

Chris Hatch

Patty Murray

Patrick Leahy

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Dick Deuk

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Tom F. Kelly

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